



Loudoun County, Virginia

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News Release

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Loudoun's Clerk of Circuit Court Elected President of VALECO

Gary M. Clemens, the Loudoun County Clerk of the Circuit Court, was recently elected president of the Virginia Association of Local Elected Constitutional Officers. Clemens was elected at the annual meeting of the Virginia Association of Local Constitutional Officers (VALECO) on January 25, 2010 in Richmond, Virginia.

VALECO is a professional association of all constitutional officers in Virginia which includes clerks of circuit court, sheriffs, commissioners of revenue, treasurers and commonwealth's attorneys. VALECO pursues legislative solutions to assist constitutional officers in fulfilling their duties and improving services to the citizens. VALECO also provides educational program to school groups, civic associations and to the constitutional officers.

"I am honored to serve as president of the umbrella constitutional officer association that represents all constitutional officers throughout Virginia," Clemens commented after accepting the nomination to serve as president. "2010 will present many challenges to the president and leadership of VALECO as the constitutional officers are facing tremendous budget cuts in the Virginia General Assembly. Former Governor Timothy Kaine's budget for the 2011 – 2012 biennium calls for total elimination of funding for salaries for the deputies in the offices of the commissioner of the revenue and the treasurers in Virginia. Proposed state budget cuts for the sheriffs, clerks of circuit court and commonwealth's attorney are also severe with the former Governor's budget calling for 16% to 28% funding reductions for these constitutional offices. Clemens acknowledges the many challenges facing VALECO this year when all constitutional offices are facing deep cuts. Our first priority is to pursue restoration of funding for the treasurers and commissioners of revenue for their deputies as they cannot operate their offices with no staff," stated Clemens. "Our other objectives are partial restoration of funding for the other constitutional offices as the local governments will be forced to incur the financial burden of covering these state cuts. If the localities cannot assume this financial burden, then some offices will face even deeper cuts and services to citizens will be greatly compromised."

Clemens believes the state needs to take more responsibility for funding the constitutional offices since the vast majority of the services provided by the offices are mandated by the Code of Virginia. "It's a very difficult year for the General Assembly when you understand the huge deficit in the Commonwealth. Unlike the federal government, the Commonwealth of Virginia cannot retain a deficit and must balance the budget each year. The constitutional officers in Virginia understand this challenge faced by the General Assembly and we are prepared to endure some reductions, however we are simply trying to avoid severe cuts that will compromise service to our citizens."

Clemens reported that many constitutional offices have already cut staff and positions in their offices and with more budget cuts coming after the General Assembly concludes the session, Clemens fears that some offices will have to cut back offices hours. "VALECO wants to work with the General Assembly to achieve a balance between budget reductions for constitutional offices and the provision of the quality services our citizens in Virginia expect and deserve," said Clemens. "The challenge is finding that balance."

Clemens has experience leading a statewide association as he served as president of the Virginia Court Clerks' Association in 2008. "I've learned a lot about leading a statewide association in 2008 and the first thing I have done to achieve success is ensuring we improve our communication, unity and teamwork among constitutional offices throughout Virginia," claims Clemens. To achieve these objectives, Clemens has plans to schedule regular executive board meetings to ensure VALECO's objectives are realized. He also plans to release a new website that will explain the role of constitutional officers in Virginia, to release a new brochure that provides more information about those offices and to establish a more effective public relations program to help educate the citizens and our legislators on the important role that constitutional officers play in the state and local governments.

"The constitutional officer form of government was established in the Virginia Constitution and as elected officials, constitutional officers are directly accountable to the people," stated Clemens. "If the people believe a constitutional officer is doing a good job, then the people can re-elect that individual. If the people believe that a constitutional officer is not serving them well, then they can elect someone whom they believe will serve effectively." Thomas Jefferson believed in the constitutional officer form of government as he stated in 1820, "I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves."

Information about the constitutional offices in Loudoun County is available on the Loudoun County government website at www.loudoun.gov/constitutional .

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